

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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AMCONSUL MADRAS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MNUC, PARM, IN
SUBJECT: EDITORIAL REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S PARLIAMENTARY
REMARKS

REF: NEW DELHI 11462

SUMMARY: ALL BUT ONE OF NEW DELHI'S JULY 28 NEWSPAPERS
CARRY EDITORIALS ON PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S JULY 26 STATEMENT
IN THE LOK SABHA ON NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS (REFTEL), IN
PARTICULAR THE REMARK THAT HE HAD NOT "DEBARRED" BLASTS FOR
ENGINEERING PURPOSES. "THE TIMES OF INDIA" AND THE "INDIAN
EXPRESS" THOUGHT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER PROBABLY DIDN'T
MEAN THAT HE WOULD ALLOW NUCLEAR "BLASTS" FOR SPECIFIC
PURPOSES. "THE HINDUSTAN TIMES" CONSIDERED A "FLEXIBLE
APPROACH TO EXPLOSIONS FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES IMPLICIT" IN
HIS REMARKS. THE LEFTIST "PATRIOT" THOUGHT HIS
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DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN EXPLOSIONS A "FINE GRAMMATICAL
DISTINCTION," AND THE PRO-INDIRA "NATIONAL HERALD"
RIDICULES HIS UNREAL "PHILOLOGICAL" DISTINCTION
BETWEEN EXPLOSION AND BLAST, BUT THEN GOES ON TO SAY
POKHARAN WAS NOT AN EXPLOSION BUT AN IMPLOSION AND
DESAI HAD NO RIGHT TO "DAMN IT." ALL EDITORIALS PICK
UP ON THE THEME OF RESISTING PRESSURES FROM THE

NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS, SEVERAL PRAISE THE PM'S RESISTENCE TO THE NPT, AND A FEW MANAGE TO BRING IN THE US STAND ON TARAPUR FOR FURTHER CRITICISM. END SUMMARY.

1. "THE TIMES OF INDIA" SAYS THAT "IT MAY NOT BE UNFAIR TO INFER THAT DESPITE THE APPARENT CONCESSION TO HIS CRITICS...THE PRIME MINISTER IN FACT REMAINS FIRM IN HIS OPPOSITION TO ALL NUCLEAR BLASTS AND THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO ALLOW ANY FOR ANY PURPOSE WHATSOEVER." NEVERTHELESS, THE "TIMES" ADDS, THE PM HAS TO COPE WITH AN EXTREMELY TICKLISH SITUATION AND PERHAPS OVERSTATES HIS CASE WHEN HE SAYS HE HAS NOT BEEN PRESSURED BY THE SUPER POWERS ON NUCLEAR TESTING. "THE INDIAN EXPRESS" SAYS THAT GIVEN THE TOTALITY OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS, IT WOULD SEEM A "HASTY CONCLUSION" TO INTERPRET THEM AS A DEPARTURE FROM DECLARED POLICY. "THE EXPRESS" ALSO SAYS THAT "CONFUSION IS THE ONLY DEFINITIVE FALLOUT" FROM WHAT DESAI SAID SINCE THERE IS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN BLASTS AND EXPLOSION. ACCORDING TO THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES", HOWEVER, DESAI'S "CATEGORICAL ASSERTION" THAT HE HAS NOT DEBARRED BLASTS FOR MINING AND OIL EXPLORATION "WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN DISPELLING SUSPICIONS OF AN INDIAN SURRENDER TO SUPER-POWER PRESSURE ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE." THE HTIMES SAYS THAT THE SEMANTICS MAY NOT BE CLEAR, BUT A UNCLASSIFIED

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"FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO EXPLOSIONS FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES SEEMS IMPLICIT" IN DESAI'S STATEMENTS. "THE NATIONAL HERALD" AT LENGTH RIDICULES THE PRIME MINISTER'S PHILOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE NATURE OF EXPLOSIONS AND MANAGES TO READ HIS CRITICISM OF THE POLITICAL MOTIVES FOR THE POKHARAN EXPLOSION AS EVIDENCE OF DESAI'S OWN NUCLEAR AMBITIONS. THE HERALD CONCLUDES THAT BECAUSE THE POKHARAN "IMPLOSION" HAD BENEFICIAL RESULTS, DESAI "HAS NO RIGHT TO CALL IT AN EXPLOSION AND DAMN IT." THE "PATRIOT" LABELS THE PRIME MINISTER A MAN OF FEW WORDS AND OF "FEWER IDEAS" AND CRITICIZES HIM FOR SURRENDERING TO US PRESSURE AND ALL BUT SIGNING THE NPT. THE "PATRIOT" ALSO SUGGESTS THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ATTEMPTING A FINE GRAMMATICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN BLASTS AND EXPLOSIONS BECAUSE HE REALIZED THAT HIS COMMITMENT NOT TO HAVE EXPLOSIONS WAS HARMFUL FOR THE COUNTRY.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS CRITICIZED IN SEVERAL OF THE EDITORIALS FOR SAYING THAT HE AND NOT THE SCIENTISTS WOULD HAVE THE FINAL DECISION IN NUCLEAR MATTERS. THE GENERAL TENOR OF THE EDITORIALS IS

THAT WHATEVER THE PRIME MINISTER MEANT BY HIS COMMENT
ON "BLASTS," THE USES OF NUCLEAR POWER CANNOT BE STUDIED
WITHOUT RESEARCH WHICH INDIA MUST BE FREE TO PURSUE
BECAUSE IT CANNOT DEPEND ON HELP FROM ELSEWHERE.
THE "HINDUSTAN TIMES" SAYS SUCH RESEARCH IS
ESSENTIAL BECAUSE THE US IS GOING BACK ON ITS TARAPUR
OBLIGATION AND SOVIET TERMS FOR FUEL ARE BECOMING
INCREASINGLY RIGOROUS. THE INDIAN EXPRESS SUGGESTS
THAT THE PM'S POSITION MEANS "WE HAVE LEARNT NO LESSONS
FROM OUR RECENT EXPERIENCE" ABOUT FUEL FOR TARAPUR.
IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR SEVERAL OF
THE EDITORIALS TO ACCEPT THE PRIME MINISTER'S
STATEMENT THAT THE POKHARAN EXPLOSION HAD PROVIDED NO
BENEFITS AND WAS AN ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD.
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